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SECRETARY OF THE STATE
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- PRESS RELEASE -

BYSIEWICZ: LATINOS, AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND WOMEN SHUT OUT OF STATE BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

FIFTY-FIVE PERCENT OF ALL STATE BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS HAVE NO MINORITY MEMBERS

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz was joined today Monday March 3rd at a press conference in her office by Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director, Latino Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC); Glenn A. Cassis, Executive Director, African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC); and Teresa C. Younger, Executive Director, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) to announce the results of the Office of the Secretary of the State's Biennial Report on the Gender and Racial Composition of Connecticut State Boards and Commissions.

"In my view, there is no question that this report highlights a disappointing lack of progress and attention to ensuring diversity on our state's boards and commissions," said Sec. Bysiewicz. "African-Americans, Latinos, and women are literally being shut out of decisions that affect the everyday lives of Connecticut's residents."

Compiled every two years by the Office of the Secretary of the State, the Biennial Report on the Gender and Racial Composition of Connecticut State Boards and Commissions provides a snapshot view of the diversity of state boards, commissions, committees and councils.

Among the key findings of this report is that 55% (113 of 207) of the organizations that filed with the Office of the Secretary of the State do not have any minority members.

Under this report, when comparing statistics to U.S. Census state population figures, men are over-represented by 14% and women are under-represented by 14%. Women are not represented at all on 13.5% of boards/commissions. These figures are all similar to those in the 2003-2005 report.

As in 2005, the 2007 report also points to the under-representation of minority groups on state boards and commissions. For example, 88.3% of board membership is white compared to a 74.8% in population; 7.4% of board membership is African-American compared to 9.3% in population.

Overall, African Americans saw only modest gains in representation on boards since 2005. While Latinos are the fastest growing minority group in Connecticut, just 3.2% of Latinos (Hispanics) serve on boards compared to 11.2% in the population.

Overall, since 1999, trends point to little change in the composition of boards and commissions among gender and race. While proportional under-representation of women and African Americans decreased slightly between 1999 and 2007, Latino appointments and other racial groups saw the disparities increase.

“For more than a decade, the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission has worked closely with appointing authorities in an attempt to increase Latino representation on state boards and commissions,” said Fernando Betancourt, LPRAC executive director. “We are appalled by lack of progress that is clearly outlined in the report issued by Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz.”

“The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission calls on the African American Affairs Commission, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the NAACP, the National Council on Community Justice, and any institution concerned by this dearth of democracy, to send a message to the Connecticut General Assembly that the time has come to correct existing statutes and dramatically reverse the abysmal under-representation of minorities in Connecticut,” said LPRAC Executive Director Fernando Betancourt.

“Despite several conversations with the Governor on the issue of diversity we have not seen any meaningful results,” said Scot X Esdaile, President Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches. “The NAACP will continue to apply pressure to achieve measurable outcomes on this important issue.”

“The National Conference for Community and Justice, NCCJ, commends the Secretary of State’s Office for their regular assessment of the gender and racial composition of the State’s boards and commissions,” said NCCJ Executive Director Andrea C. Kandel. “After reviewing the report, it is clear that there is much work that needs to be done to increase the diversity on the state boards and commissions so that they are truly representative of our state’s population. In addition, NCCJ recommends that the state simultaneously look at recruitment as well as retention at this level. Conducting exit interviews of women and men of color could help in developing more effective

mentoring and training systems that may increase retention of these continually under represented populations.”

By law (CSG 4-9B), since 1993 the Office of the Secretary of the State has maintained the filing of Gender and Racial Composition reports by state boards and commissions. Secretary Bysiewicz has taken these filings one step further by preparing a state report on the progress and accompanying statistics with regard to gender and race of these panels.

The chairperson or executive officer of each organization with one or more members appointed by the governor or by a member of the General Assembly must file a report with the Office of the Secretary of the State. Committees of the General Assembly are exempt.

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